

MAYOR AND COUNCIL STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA SUBCOMMITTEE
RIO NUEVO/DOWNTOWN, ARTS, CULTURE AND HISTORY

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION REPORT AND SUMMARY

Thursday, August 24, 2006

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:	Council Member Nina Trasoff, Subcommittee Chair, Ward 6 Council Member Jose Ibarra, Ward 1 Council Member Steve Leal, Ward 5
STAFF LIAISON:	Greg Shelko, Rio Nuevo Director
STAFF PRESENTERS:	Marie Nemerguth, Assistant to the City Manager Albert Elias, Director of Urban Planning & Design Jim Glock, Director of Transportation

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<p>1. Call to Order</p> <p>Chair Trasoff called the meeting to order at 5:17 p.m. The meeting was held at the Ward 6 Council Office, 3202 E. 1st Street, Tucson, Arizona.</p>	
<p>4. Tucson Center for Performing Arts</p> <p>Item No. 4 was taken out of order. Ms. Nemerguth updated the subcommittee on The Tucson Center for Performing Arts. The building located at 408 S. 6th Avenue was built in 1921. In 1990, the City took ownership and the Arizona Theatre Company managed operations. In 2001, Poster Frost conducted a structural analysis and developed a construction plan to repair structural problems and deteriorated masonry joints. At that time, the City did not have the money to make repairs and the building was closed. Recently Parks & Recreation, General Services, Urban Planning & Design and Rio Nuevo have been discussing ways to prevent further deterioration of the building. It is there recommendation that the City move forward on a Phase I stabilization effort, which would include retaining Poster Frost to update the study conducted in 2001, and come up with current construction plans and estimates for the stabilization project. Funding for this phase would come from the \$682,000 that was approved by the voters in the 2004 Pima County Bond Referendum. Parks & Recreation has the bond money budgeted in its capital program over the next two fiscal years. If approved, the study would be updated this fiscal year and construction could start next fiscal year with the project overseen by General Services and coordinated by Parks and Recreation.</p> <p>Ms. Nemerguth noted that Phase I would only stabilize the building. It would not lead to it being occupied. Concerns about its long-term operation, building maintenance and the building's viability remain. There are no funds allocated for turnkey operation. That issue would have to be visited at a later date.</p>	

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<p>Chair Trasoff stated it was her understanding that the original concept for expenses were not just for stabilizing the building, but for adding amenities such as the sound system and lighting, and getting it ready for performances. Ms. Nemerguth said that escalating construction costs have resulted in the City not having enough money to do everything needed to bring it up to standards for occupation, nor to add the needed amenities. Staff could submit a grant for Arizona State Historic Preservation funds, or pursue other revenue sources to open it up for operation. Mr. Elias added that after the Pima County bond funds have been expended, the condition of the building could be assessed and if the improvements are sufficient to open, then it will. Visually, the building doesn't look bad. Council Member Leal state it would be helpful to know how much it's going to cost to get the building to the next level, because once the assessment has been done, the community is going to have an expectation that the building will open.</p> <p>Ms. Nemerguth concluded by stating that Parks & Recreation is drafting an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) that is required in order to expend the bond funds and Pima County Cultural staff indicated that they will concur with the plan. Staff will continue to draft the IGA and schedule this item for discussion by the full Mayor and Council.</p>	<p><u>PARKS & RECREATION</u> Is responsible.</p>
<p>3. Infill Incentive District</p>	
<p>Item No. 3 was taken next. Mr. Elias addressed subcommittee on the Infill Incentive District. On August 10th staff was directed to develop a boundary map for the proposed Infill Incentive District. The District is allowed under Arizona Revised Statutes if three of six criteria are met. It would allow for the waiver of certain zoning procedures, development related activity fees, and flexibility with respect to development standards. The boundary includes the Rio Nuevo downtown redevelopment district, 4th Avenue business district and key downtown gateways (6th Avenue down to the South Tucson boundary, the Greenway alignment, Stone Avenue up to Grant Road, the Oracle Corridor up to Grant Road, and Drachman between Stone and Oracle). Established downtown neighborhoods (Armory Park, Barrio Viejo, West University, El Presidio, Barrio Anita, Dunbar-Springs) are not included because the purpose of the Infill Incentive District is to take advantage of vacant land that is available for redevelopment. Whereas, the objective of the residential neighborhoods is to protect the fabric of the neighborhoods and one way staff is taking steps to do that is by establishing National Historic Neighborhoods.</p> <p>This item will be presented to the Mayor & Council Environment Planning & Resource Management Subcommittee on September 14th. When it goes to the full Mayor & Council for approval, staff will also suggest potential ways to encourage infill development.</p>	

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Chair Trasoff stated that at the request of Council Member Ulrich, the northern boundary was moved from Speedway to Grant to allow for a larger gateway and address some of the issues being faced by Ward 3. Council Member Ibarra was pleased that this would expedite zoning and zoning procedures and gave The Post development as an example. Instead of it taking a year and a half to get a rezoning, this should cut the time down significantly. Hopefully, developers will be able to catch the housing market wave to make the projects much more viable and future downtown projects can start moving ahead. Council Trasoff added that there would still be checks and balances in place to ensure that there will still be a public process. Council Member Leal asked if adaptive reuses would be a part of this infill district; for example, parking variances for existing structures when parking might be available at adjacent parcels. Mr. Elias responded yes.

Council Member Leal made a motion to support forwarding the item to the next subcommittee and to the full Mayor and Council as presented. Council Member Ibarra seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

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& DESIGN
Is responsible.

2. 4th Avenue & Toole Avenue Projects

Mr. Glock addressed the 4th Avenue Underpass project. Since the original plan was replaced when Jim Campbell proposed Plaza Centro, staff has been focusing on the geometric vertical and horizontal alignment. Aesthetics and architectural treatments have not yet been determined. The City retained the services of urban planner, Aleks Istanbulu of Ai Architects to design a plan for the south side of the tunnel. Mr. Istanbulu developed a unique concept for the City to consider. The plan includes:

- some unique assemblage of parcels for development;
- one lane of travel in each direction (approximately 20ft wide);
- a 6ft wide bike lane on the west side;
- a vehicular lane to be shared with the trolley; and
- one sidewalk to accommodate the pedestrian movements from north to south on the eastside of the tunnel.

The suggestion providing the greatest amount of conversation in the community and concern on the part of the Tucson Police Department (TPD) is the one sidewalk concept. TPD has expressed three key issues with respect to the proposal.

- 1) Pedestrians probably won't take the most gratuitous route, but would use the shortest path, which would be the bike lane on the west side of the tunnel;
- 2) The 200ft long 20ft wide width of the sidewalk on the eastside would make it a desirable hangout and result in the same problems they experience at the Ronstadt Transit Center;
- 3) Should a crisis occur within the tunnel's sidewalk area, they would have to close the sidewalk and people wouldn't be able to use the sidewalk to get to the other

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side.

Mr. Istanbulu presented his proposal. Its purpose is to provide a connection from the historic Congress Street business district to the already active 4th Avenue business district. He proposes:

- Using the Historic Depot parking area as a multi-use area, with amenities and awnings, that would provide opportunities for a farmers market or temporary outdoor performance space. Originally, Toole Avenue was going to be closed in order to deal with grading issues associated with the trolley.
- A covered arcade with outdoor seating would run along the north side of the Rialto Block.
- A pedestrian bridge and an elevator would be located at the south end of the tunnel allowing people to go over the street to a latent park located at the Historic Depot.
- A pedestrian circle, completely level with no grade changes, would act as a connecting circulation system.
- A single sidewalk was proposed as one way of generating activity because if you have everyone using just one sidewalk you'll have twice as many people using it and then there is only one tunnel to supervise.
- The tunnel provides an opportunity to feature artwork on its walls, or could contain the history of the railroad with a fountain on the south end.

Council Member Leal initially liked the idea of having one sidewalk on the eastside of the tunnel because the goal isn't just connecting north and south, but to strengthening the eastside of downtown. A wider sidewalk would make people feel safer and add a lot of pedestrian traffic to the area. However, he later said pedestrian studies are important and if the proposal is going to add distance, that could influence people's decisions and that may be something that needs to be considered.

Council Member Trasoff stated that the 4th Avenue Merchants Association (FAMA) has an opposing view that she would like to allow them to express. Daniel Manthias, President of the FAMA said they feel like they have been left out of the process. FAMA provided staff with a six-page document stating their position. They are not against the Plaza Central project. They are not asking for the underpass to be left open. However, they are requesting that a pedestrian passageway be phased in as soon as possible and not have it closed off for two years. He said there's a perception that the underpass isn't used very much, but they conducted their own pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle study the week of August 5th. To validate their statistics they videotaped it. What they found was that southbound pedestrian traffic was 1711 people and northbound traffic were 259 people. That number probably doubles when school is in session and students go to the Ronstadt Transit Center to make their transit connections.

FAMA is not opposed to having the sidewalk on the eastside of the tunnel; however,

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their primary concern is taking care of existing businesses and that includes the businesses located in the Historic Depot. Twelve million dollars was invested in restoring that building. Mr. Manthias conducted his own study by walking to the Bistro Café for lunch. He said from his office to the front door of the restaurant it was 817 feet and he didn't have to cross any streets. On the way back, he went the way he would have to go if he didn't use the staircase to be located on the southend of the tunnel. He crossed Toole Avenue, Congress Street, and then Broadway Boulevard and it was 1,139 ft.

He also noted that there's a massive land area with over 100,000 sq. feet just north of the tunnel in the 200 block of 4th Avenue that could be developed in the future. If you come up the underpass on the eastside and want to cross over to the west side, it's right at the mouth of the underpass where cars and trolleys will be coming up from the underpass creating some safety issues.

FAMA supports Toole Avenue being open because they want people to go to the Warehouse Arts District.

Basically, they support putting sidewalks on each side of the underpass and they want to make sure that the facade for the underpass is appropriate.

Council Member Trasoff added that staff is also planning to run free TICET shuttles through 6th or Stone Avenues during the tunnel closure, transporting people from 4th Avenue to Congress Street. In addition, 7th and 8th Streets are being improved to make it easier for kids from Tucson High to get to 4th Avenue and the Ronstadt Transit Center. She assured FAMA that the Transportation Department values their input and they will be included every step of the way.

Council Member Ibarra commented that whatever decision is made, downtown needs to get moving. The City cannot afford delays. The community's trust and excitement is being eroded because of the fact that nothing is happening. Everyone needs to start making compromises and make a decision.

Council Member Trasoff agreed, but noted that there are other decisions that need to be made: one-way vs. two-way streets, the Aviation-Barraza alignment, Toole Avenue, the Arena, etc. So although she doesn't want to slow things down, everything needs to be conceptual. She hears the need for a study, but more importantly she wants to hear back from law enforcement. ***She directed staff to meet with the downtown stakeholders including FAMA, the Tucson Downtown Alliance and businesses in the Historic Depot and return with a consensus in two weeks. She wants a recommendation from the Tucson Police Department and if they have problems with the design, she wants them to suggest solutions to the problems.***

Mr. Glock said that staff is waiting for a formal list of TPD's concerns. He doesn't

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<p>doubt the figures provided by FAMA and therefore doesn't think staff needs to conduct another study. What the figures do show is that pedestrians tend to use the west side sidewalk much more than the eastside. The one-sidewalk proposal does not solve the walking and bike lane issues, and if these issues cannot be solved, or the public safety issues can not be solved, two sidewalks on each end of the tunnel is the only solution.</p> <p>Call to the audience was combined with this agenda item.</p> <p>Ms. Sonia Economou, owner of Central Bistro located in The Historic Depot stated that she is opposed to Mr. Istanbulu's proposal. It closes Toole and takes away their parking lot that is part of their lease with the City.</p> <p>Roger Karber, a member of the Tucson Downtown Alliance (TDA) said they represent the businesses along Congress and they are willing and ready to work on the project.</p> <p>Don Durband, TDA said he agreed with everything Mr. Manthias said. However, one issue that was barely brushed on was that the City is talking about closing a street downtown and that really needs to be addressed. Council Member Trasoff responded that what is being moved on today is only the tunnel and the sidewalk placement. The closure of the underpass and possible closure of Toole is a different issue. It also looks like the grading issue maybe solved without having to close Toole Avenue. Mr. Glock said a decision on Toole Avenue is not on the critical path right now. They really need to get in front of the railroad for the permitting request for the underpass. Every week delayed delays the start of construction.</p> <p>Two unidentified people spoke. There comments were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the height of the tunnel, more than width, will affect how people feel about going through the tunnel • if TPD is concerned with people gathering in the tunnel, has the City given any thought to moving sidewalks to move people through the tunnel quickly? 	
<p>5. Call to the Audience</p> <p>This item was combined with Item No. 2 – 4th Avenue & Toole Avenue Projects.</p>	
<p>6. Future Agenda Items</p> <p>No future agenda items were added at this time.</p>	
<p>7. Adjournment</p> <p>The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.</p>	